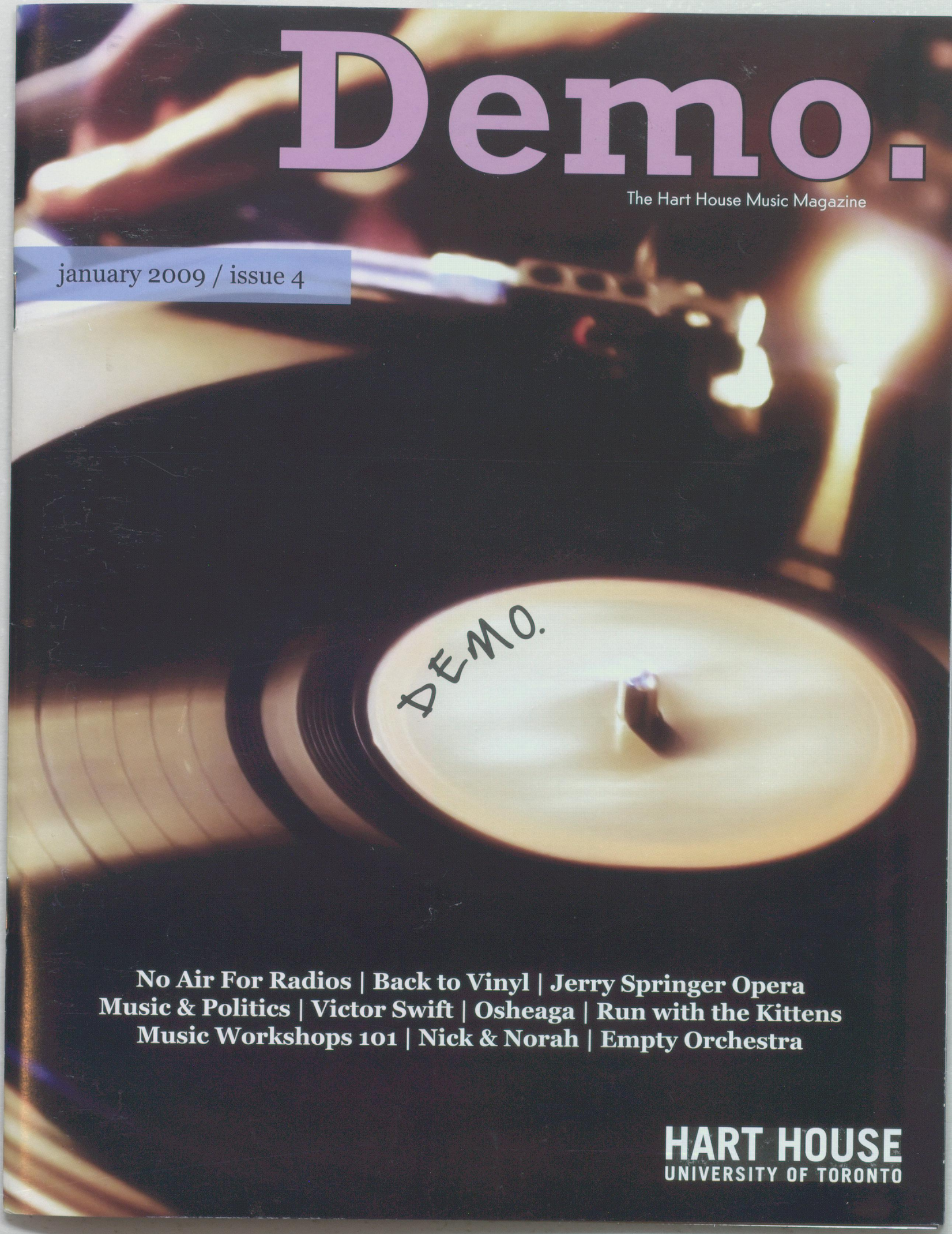
Demo.

The Hart House Music Magazine

january 2009 / issue 4



No Air For Radios | Back to Vinyl | Jerry Springer Opera
Music & Politics | Victor Swift | Osheaga | Run with the Kittens
Music Workshops 101 | Nick & Norah | Empty Orchestra

HART HOUSE
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

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Demo.

Dearest Readers,

I am continually surprised each day with the wonders technology brings to the music realm—a friend recently asked me to install a program that will give him complete download access to my iTunes library. Sorry, but that is just a little too much exposure for me.

Don't get me wrong; I absolutely embrace our digital, online generation for its efficiency and mind-boggling gadgets. But sometimes, the bombardment is a bit overwhelming. Call me old-fashioned, but whatever happened to the sanctity of a handpicked mix tape?

Music distribution has come a long way. I think I have actually experienced three generations within the span of my childhood and teenage years alone: cassettes, CDs, and the infinite abyss they call the Internet. But wait, who can ignore the most genuine recorded medium of all? Let's just say I can add vinyls as a fourth item to that list. Even if I am a bit young for the original insurgence, I am just in time for its comeback.

This hybridity between old and new is exactly what we are trying to bring you with the fourth issue of *Demo*. Our opinion writers target this evolution with the **downfall of radio**, and on the flip side, the **return of vinyl records**. In our features, we go behind the scenes to catch the power of music in the context of contemporary social culture. **Jerry Springer the Opera** brings blasphemy to a whole new level in its transformation of a modern, reality talk show to a classic musical art form. And in light of the elections this fall, we look back on the history of **political music endorsement**. Perhaps it is the very essence of music as expression for, say, patriotism that really made the 2008 American election stand out with such superiority over the Canadians'.

We have expanded the reviews to include **art**, and for the first time, we shine the spotlight on one of our own, **Victor Swift**, a first-year beyond his years. Don't forget to check out the editors' pick of **vinyl hotspots** in the city, and the brand new **Soundbooth** section with tracklists to suit your winter needs—our own version of a printed mix tape just for you.

So, dear readers, stay warm from the cold, and indulge a little. I know I will, and this time I am trading in my headphones for the scratchy audio perfection that can only come from my wonderfully musty record collection.

Yours always,

Macy Siu
Editor-in-Chief

Demo.

Music News:
On and Off Campus

january 2009 | issue four

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Demo welcomes letters from its readers.
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Hart House Revamped

Zaje Dille

Since 1919, Hart House has sat on a bedrock of bricks and mortar finding a solid foundation in the centre of the downtown campus and in the fabric of an emerging Toronto. Its gothic beauty and quiet dignity gives it a feel of days gone by. But don't discount it as a thing of the past lumbering up against its post-modern counterparts. Hart House has remained vital to the community and a welcoming home to thousands of students.

While it is true that the House is unable to change its façade, there has been a veritable hotbed of change and fluidity inside. The new HUB (formerly the hall porters desk) is a shiny new example of how Hart House is adapting to new demands. The new HUB desk is a bright and welcoming reception area that combines the functions of the former hall porters and the membership services office together in one place. You can book the farm, sign up for an athletic class, sign out a pool table or just come by and ask a question. This new amalgamation, allows these essential Hart House services to be delivered for much longer hours than previously. By all accounts, this seems to be a great improvement over the old desk … who knew what a hall porter was anyway? Bonus points if you guessed it was from a long ago era when Hart House had guest rooms and therefore "porters" were needed to carry luggage upstairs! Old habits die hard, and while the HUB staff won't carry your books around, they will still answer to the name "hall porter".

The catering and events offices have moved from the relative invisibility of their offices behind the great hall to the old membership services offices located right on the main floor hallway. Catering now handles set up for your event, food services, and bookings in one central location. Student groups will be happy to know that there is one dedicated student liaison assigned to book and help plan events with Hart House and UofT student groups. New staff has been added to the Marketing and Communications portfolio. Led by Michel Meserau, the team includes two interns, a senior communications officer, and a senior graphic designer. The programme department has said good-bye to our old friend Jeff Richardson (Camera Club, Literary and Library Committee, and Social Justice) and said hello to our latest addition Day Milman. We've also added four new programme staff interns to our team.

Lastly, the theatre has undergone extensive changes and was recently re-opened by respected Canadian actor Christopher Plummer. The theatre's stunning new Macdonald Heaslip Walkway of Theatre History is the first permanent home for Theatre Museum Canada's eclectic collection of Canadian Theatre History, and the Theatre's newly refurbished walkway is the perfect place for these artifacts to come to life.

All of these changes have been exhilarating and energizing. Our programmes and events, including all our musical offerings, have remained intact and we were able to introduce new and exciting music partnerships such as the Faculty of Music's student jazz salon on Tuesday nights. Top notch jazz acts continue to perform as part of our Jazz at Oscars series and cutting edge indie music, pop, urban, and folk find a place in our Stages series. Midday Mosaics and Sunday Concerts make up the rest of our roster, and students on this year's Music Committee are working hard to make these 'must-see' events. Nowadays perhaps it's a question of people keeping up with Hart House rather than the other way around. What would Vincent Massey think? He'd probably say Hart House is doing exactly what it's supposed to: staying relevant, current and vital to its campus, city and community at large.

April 2008, issue 3

CORRECTION

In "Tiny Alligator: Big Sound, Big Apple" (p. 6-7), we wrote that "having completed two years [at Humber College] already, [Caitlin] Smith hopes to complete her three year diploma soon." Smith, however, has already completed her diploma in Jazz Studies and is hoping to complete Humber's degree extension program to earn her BMus.

We apologize for any confusion and wish Caitlin Smith all the best with her endeavors.

—Demo

Worlds of Music Toronto

Tim Des Islets

Worlds of Music Toronto (WOMT) is a hidden gem within Toronto's vibrant music scene. It is not a music venue or band but a collection of musicians sharing the music of their culture with students of all ages.

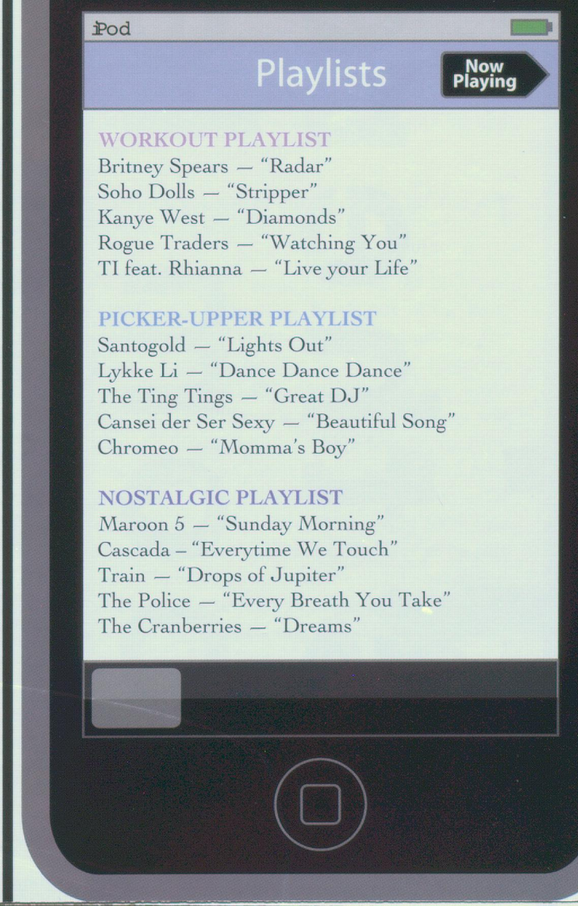
Dedicated to promoting cultural interchange through music, WOMT has offered hundreds of workshops in traditions from around the world to students from all walks of life. Most of these workshops take place on the UofT campus at Hart House and are available to all UofT students.

Since its inception, Worlds of Music has presented workshops in traditions from Barbados, Bolivia, Brazil, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Canada (First Nations and Canadian Fiddling), Chile, Cuba, Eastern Europe, Ghana, India, Macedonia, South Africa, and Tuva just to name a few.

Musical training is not required for participation—just enthusiasm and a desire to learn and have fun. Worlds of Music Toronto workshops are a great place to meet new people and have fun making music from around the world.

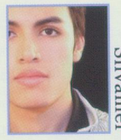
Registration for Winter and Spring workshops is on now. For more info, visit **www.worldsofmusic.ca** today!

Demo's iPod press play


iPod
Playlists
Now Playing
WORKOUT PLAYLIST
Britney Spears — "Radar"
Soho Dolls — "Stripper"
Kanye West — "Diamonds"
Rogue Traders — "Watching You"
TI feat. Rhianna — "Live your Life"
PICKER-UPPER PLAYLIST
Santogold — "Lights Out"
Lykke Li — "Dance Dance Dance"
The Ting Tings — "Great DJ"
Cansei der Ser Sexy — "Beautiful Song"
Chromeo — "Momma's Boy"
NOSTALGIC PLAYLIST
Maroon 5 — "Sunday Morning"
Cascada – "Everytime We Touch"
Train — "Drops of Jupiter"
The Police — "Every Breath You Take"
The Cranberries — "Dreams"

opinion

Is there any room left for radio?



Rudy Silvamer

The explosion of the digital music market along with MySpace-like services have been shaping the way people listen to their favourite music. Namely, this system of music à la carte with our iPods and laptops has irreversibly affected radio relevance worldwide. Who wants to be given choices by a DJ when we can get to be our own?

A similar case is the one of MTV, a TV channel much like the radio. But they have been fighting back by featuring original programming. Viewers do not like to be told what to see—especially when they have YouTube. That's why even the pop standard TRL passed away recently, and apparently took with it the million-dollar video era, not to mention the Video Music Awards because the last ones were more of a Bar Mitzvah side-dish than a rockstar spectacle (at times I had the impression that they were secretly taped at The Varsity arena).

It's not a secret that radio is part of the same heartless branch of the music industry; it's driven by marketing and business. Neither is the fact that getting airplay by a major radio station is still a breakthrough moment that usually introduces music's commercial value. Suit or bohemian, everyone is an artist in their own right.

Certainly, there is no sin in making music for profit, and with all these constrains marked by new technologies, radio has been trying to adapt to its commercial decline by re-branding their aged style.

CBC radio has recently adopted a new, edgier style of programming. The station has recently reduced its classical music airplay to incorporate new Canadian talent. Expectedly, this could open the station up to a new generation of listeners —the ones that check out messages on Facebook. A similar shift occured with the introduction of Virgin 99.9, originally Mix 99.9, but this was more a change of logo than a change in programming. Nonetheless, Wayne Webster, Virgin's music director says, "we are featuring more, new Canadian talent."

However, with internet multimedia portals, blogs and pocket-size data storage, radio is not the only sufferer. Magazine sales and now even TV ratings (especially after the writers' strike) are down as well.

Who needs radio, cable TV, magazines and DVDs when we have torrents, YouTube, MySpace, Google, and Perez Hilton? There's more, it's not only free but it also can fit in the palm of our hand in our iPhones. Pocket technologies and smartphones are an investment, even with the rip-off data plans from Rogers.

The big winners in this game are of course telephone companies that will retain control over the way people access information. With the infinite problems that entertainment producers will have to fight over copyright and anti-piracy solutions, internet companies are sitting comfortably and enjoying the ride. In the next decade, the only thing we will need is the internet. Not surprisingly, Rogers has already discontinued unlimited data plans and introduced limited-data and pay per kilobyte ones. EMI Music has expressed support to track ISPs of internet users to prevent and control piracy, and The Songwriters' Association of Canada has proposed to charge internet providers with a fixed fee of $5 to help cushion the recording industry crisis.

Arguably, telephone companies have played it right. They expanded from telephones, to cable TV, to wireless and internet. Unfortunately, radio (among other media) is not having the same evolution.

So is there any room left for radio?

Soon enough, radio will be substituted by smartphones, which will not only allow access to podcasts and music websites, but will also let us store our complete music and video library in one pocket. Making no mistake we will like what we hear, and if we are feeling risky we can shuffle it.

But how is new talent going to be discovered in a massive web of threads if not through filters like radio?

Snow Patrol's "Chasing Cars" made it to #5 on the Billboard Hot 100 via ABC's *Grey's Anatomy*. It was one of the most prolific singles of 2007. Also through *Grey's Anatomy*, the Fray found stardom, and according to *Billboard Magazine*, they are doing it again. They will be featuring their new single through ABC's *Lost* (the album is edgier) and viewers will have the choice to follow through with a link to abc.com. Guns N' Roses' new album *Chinese Democracy* debuted fully on MySpace, as well as Coldplay's *Viva La Vida*, which so far occupies the third spot on the best-sold albums of 2008. Eric Hutchinson (among others) came out of the blue to be part of the top 10 on iTunes, thanks to a feature on internet mogul Perez Hilton's blog. Mariah Carey's penned "Hero" recently became the second fastest selling single of all time in the U.K., thanks to Simon Cowell's *X-Factor*.

Yes, certainly there are more artists, and radio is still the platform of many—if not most of them, but this is only the curtain call. The apocalypse is coming.

Opinion

Survival of the Fittest:

The Return of Vinyl Records

Assunta Alegiani

Vinyl Hotspots in Toronto

Hits and Misses
860 Bloor St. W.
(416) 535-7817

Criminal Records
493 Queen St. W.
(416) 364-5380

Paradise Bound Music
270 Augusta Avenue,
Kensington Market
(416) 916-7770

Kops Records
229 Queen St. W.
(416) 593-8523

She Said Boom
393 Roncesvalles Ave.
(416) 531-6843

This is my coming-out and I will openly state to all readers what my friends have known for a long time: I collect CDs. There, it's out.

Whenever I tell people I'm still buying CDs they look at me as if I were some crazy person proclaiming the earth is flat. In the time of musical digitalization, music is seen as a product that anyone can get anytime and consume anywhere. Don't we all love our iPod?

The way people perceive and consume music has changed in many ways. Today the most common and convenient way to get hold of a song is to switch on the computer and download whatever the heart desires. Music has become a steady companion in our everyday lives, but it hasn't always been like that. The perception and consumption of music has come a long way since the vinyl, the godfather of the record album.

The beginning of the commercial distribution of music started in the latter part of the 19th Century with the invention of the 10" shellac record. Its disadvantage was the short playtime. As a result, someone who wanted to listen to a piece of classical music had to put on several records to get the whole experience… what a drag!

> "To buy vinyl is to make a statement."

In 1948, the answer was found: the vinyl record replaced the shellac due to its almost indestructible nature and the advantage of a much longer playtime (it was appropriately called the Long Playing record). At those times, listening to music was celebrated as a special occasion where everybody gathered around. Up until the 1980s, the vinyl record was the one and only medium, but this soon changed.

In 1982, the companies Sony and Phillips introduced the Compact Disc to the world. It was greatly appreciated by the music industry, since the production costs were much lower and it was easier to produce them. However, the CD didn't have such an easy ride with the consumers. Many criticized the poor acoustic quality and the smaller size, which naturally diminishes a record album's artwork. Even so, the vinyl was soon proclaimed dead. Its sales went continuously downhill, while CD sales made the industry rich.

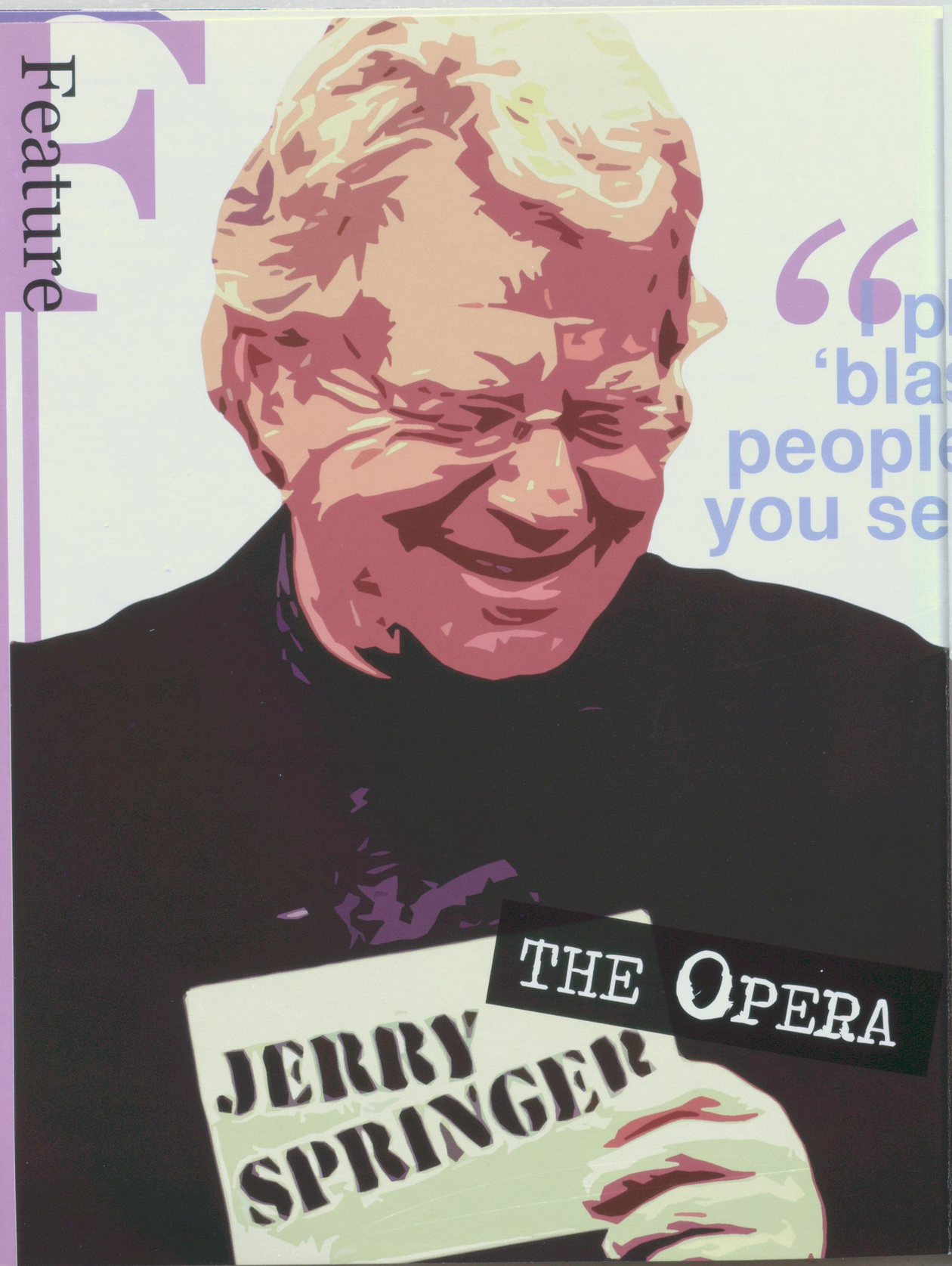
In 1997, the MP3 format was introduced and brought about the biggest crisis in the music industry to date, with music piracy and greatly decreasing CD sales as the biggest challenges. Since then, new means of distribution have emerged, which seriously question the music industry's right to exist. Just look at the Arctic Monkeys. They began their career, not by being signed, but by distributing their music through MySpace. Or the revolutionary release of Radiohead's last album *In Rainbows*, in October 2007. The band refused to release their album on any physical medium. It could be downloaded on Radiohead's website and the buyer was to decide if and how much to pay for it. These acts prove the growing power of the artist over the industry and the more direct ways of communication between artists and their fans. At the same time, this also takes away the mystery of the album and the magic of music. There is a reason why artists release albums. They are coherent compilations of musical pieces that are meant to be listened to in the order given. Furthermore, the artistry of the artwork and booklet often stand for themselves and they go hand-in-hand with the songs they contain. A loss of that view of music is accelerated by the sense that single songs are available for download at any time. The consumer simply picks out whichever song he or she likes best.

Considering that trend, it is surprising to see that lately, there has been a renewed interest in vinyl records, not only amongst music lovers of the sixties. To the delight of many fans, more and more contemporary artists additionally release their albums on vinyl, often adding bonus tracks and other special features not available on CD. Is this a new way to demonstrate a middle-finger-attitude towards the digitalization of music? "There has been an increase in the sales of vinyl records, especially in the indie genre," says Chris Flanagan, employee at Kops Records, a record store that specializes in vinyl. "There isn't a specific age group," he comments, "vinyl is bought by young and old, it all depends on the music taste. The younger ones are usually interested in indie. And of course there are the hardcore collectors, who mostly look for psychedelic rock, soul, and reggae."

What good does it do for the listener though? In terms of money, it sure is cheaper to simply download or even buy a CD. But the vinyl represents a way of consuming music that goes beyond the issue of money. To buy vinyl is to make a statement.

Many proponents claim that it can replay sounds the CD isn't capable of, and thus has a warmer tone. The comeback of the vinyl may not revolutionize the industry again, but it is an attempt to keep an original art form alive. It also allows music to be more than just a pretty melody. The music experience starts in a record store where you can lose yourself between all the promising artworks; it continues at home where you excitedly put on your purchase in the hopes of not being let down; and it ends with the glance through the booklet, trying to catch every little hint of meaning the artist might have hidden.

Hm, maybe I should switch to collecting vinyl? But then again, the CD may have its comeback too.



"I plan to make it even more 'blasphemous' to make sure that people get the crucifixion of Jerry Springer 23rd Dec."

Jessica Mifsud

Preview

Stop me if you've heard this one. So Jesus, Mary, Adam, Eve, and God all go on TV to sort out their family history. And guess who interviews them all? Jerry Springer! Ha-ha! What a riot! Wait, I think I messed that up. Let me start over.

This coming winter, the University of Toronto's Hart House Theatre will host the Canadian premiere of *Jerry Springer: The Opera*. From January 16 to 31, Hart House Theatre's stage will be swarming with transsexuals, adulterers, rednecks, and the Devil. And if you think that's shocking, hold on to your hat: you haven't even seen the first act yet.

The play was originally created by Richard Thomas in early 2001, after experimenting in 2000 with a one-act opera he wrote called *Tourette's Diva*. Its first incarnation was known as *How to Write an Opera About Jerry Springer*, which boasted a cast of four singers, and was performed at London's Battersea Arts Center in 2002. *How to Write…* garnered enough positive press—and the green light from Studios USA, who own *The Jerry Springer Show*—to get Thomas to take the idea another step further.

With the help of Stewart Lee, who directed the original stage production, the pair helped Thomas's one-man show evolve into a three-act modern opera. The complete show moved through runs at the Edinburgh Festival in 2002, and the National Theatre in London in 2003, before going on a tour of the United Kingdom. Along the way, the production grew to include a cast of 33 people, and earned itself both praise and condemnation from the masses.

Despite its success, the show has had its dissenters. Largely due to Act Two's depiction of Judeo-Christian religious figures (including a "half-naked, obese, and spoiled" Jesus), multiple religious parodies, and according to the *Washington Post*, Jerry Springer's appearance as "the saviour of mankind", the opera has drawn negative attention from various religious groups.

At almost every British production, protesters from *Christian Voice* picketed the show, handing out leaflets and singing church hymns to try and convince passers-by and patrons not to attend the show. Across the pond the situation was no better: the few American productions that were staged (in places like Chicago, Washington D.C., and Memphis) also received negative attention and protests from religious groups.

Organizations such as the American Society for the Defence of Tradition, Family, and Property simply refer to the whole show as "blasphemous". Back in Britain, when the BBC prepared to televise a filmed version of the stage show, they received numerous complaints about the play, the more mild of which included "obscene language put into mouths of the members of the Holy Family" and "[the] portrayal of God as needing Jerry Springer's advice."

None of this, however, was enough to stop the show from being aired, nor to stop the production's incredible success. Jerry Springer has found much critical praise, called a "thrillingly down-and-dirty production" by the *Washington Post*, and the BBC found it to be a production of "outstanding artistic significance". The opera has also won numerous awards, including Laurence Olivier Awards for Best Musical, Best Actor (for David Bedella's performance as Satan), Best Performance in a Supporting Role (the Chorus), and Best Sound Design, in 2004.

If this doesn't give you a pretty clear idea of what to expect at *Jerry Springer: the Opera*, perhaps a look at clips of the soundtrack might. One of the first things you will notice is the incredible level of musical contrast that can be found in Jerry's musical numbers. Tracks like "Audience Very Plainsong", from early in Act One highlights what the audience will come to expect from the rest of the show: fantastic singing and harmonics, paired with lyrics that would send any uptight censor screaming from the room.

A clip of the song "F*** You Talk" from Act Three of the play (which can be found on YouTube) emphasizes this contrast, as Satan and Jesus engage in a three-minute long vocal battle, where Satan curses at least fifty times, yet maintains a most impressive bass harmony to counter Jesus' equally classical tenor rebuttal.

The National Theatre website's interview with Thomas and Stewart has Thomas shedding some light on the reasons for choosing to stage his work as an opera: "We're bringing opera to a wider audience, so they can hate it too," Thomas said. "[There is] something about opera that diminishes the violence of language, you can just get away with a lot."

Indeed, while critics will agree that the play does attempt to slide a lot under the radar by choosing to present obscenities and insults through the medium of a delightfully well-orchestrated score, fans will revel in the clash of cultural extremes. But most, if not everyone in the audience, will certainly appreciate the show for far more than the absurd piece it may seem to be at first listen.

Interview with the director

Demo had a chance to talk to Richard Ouzounian, *Toronto Star* theatre critic, and the director of the upcoming production of *Jerry Springer: the Opera* at Hart House Theatre. Here's what he had to say about the play, and why nay-sayers of the production won't like him this January:

Why did directing this production appeal to you?

I was thrilled with it the first time I saw it on television. I found it irreverent, hilarious and full of intense musicality. All of these things appealed to me.

You have a lot of theatre experience in both traditional and musical forms of theatre. Does that make directing an opera more or less of a challenge?

I think of opera, operetta, musical comedy, rock opera, revue etc. all as forms of music theatre. In some, the content is more elevated than in others, but the basic tenets of how you have to balance the demands of music and drama remain essentially the same.

What is your opinion on the controversy and protests surrounding the production? Do you think that could happen here this January?

I'm aware of all the demonstrations etc., that have occurred in England, Washington D.C., Chicago and New York. I find all forms of protest against the arts on grounds of morality to be ill-advised, but I wouldn't be surprised at all if we received our own protests this January.

Have the accusations of "blasphemy" in *Jerry Springer: the Opera* had any bearing on the way you are choosing to stage the play?

Yes. I plan to make it even more "blasphemous" to make sure people get the point. Wait until you see the crucifixion of Jerry Springer!

Do you have a favourite song from the production?

My favorite is what I guess you could call the "title song", "This Is My Jerry Springer Moment", with the unforgettable lyric "So dip me in chocolate and throw me to the lesbians!"

Jerry Springer: the Opera* features some stunning moments of musical-lyrical contrast (e.g. the "F You Talk" song). How do you think this adds to the overall impact of the play?**

The more intense the level of music composition, and the more outrageous the lyrics, the higher the stakes are raised dramatically. The authors of this show are well aware of it and often mix the most elevated notes with the most scandalous words for full effect.

Could or would people with no opera experience enjoy this production?

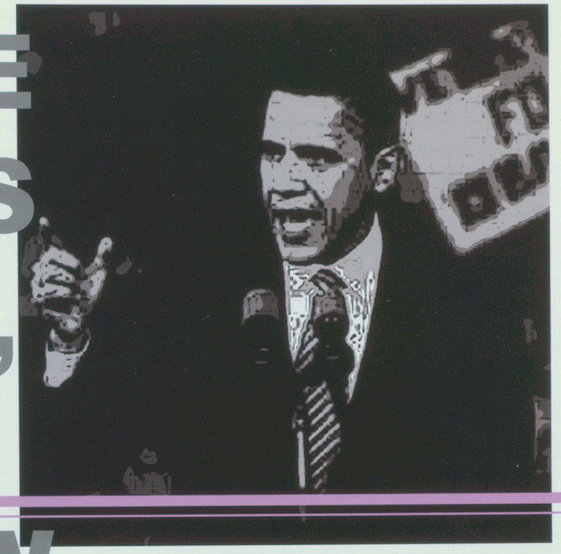
Absolutely. In many ways, it's more musical theatre than opera, but there's enough quality composition to appeal to opera fans as well.

***Jerry Springer: the Opera* runs from January 16 to 31 at the Hart House Theatre. Tickets available at uofttix.ca.**

Demo Q&A with dir. R. Ouzounian

Feature

YES, WE CAN



When Politics and Music Collide

Sarah Ramsaran

A guitar strums a simple tune. A melody emerges. A voice is heard: "It was a creed written into the founding documents that declared the destiny of a nation. Yes we can. It was whispered by slaves and abolitionists as they blazed the trail towards freedom. Yes we can."

The strumming continues, harmony is added, different tones of voices are heard, slowly and softly spilling out a message to music. It is a message of hope. A message from musicians to

the world, a message from musicians to Americans, a message to vote for Barack Obama for change, for hope. "In the nightly story that is America, there has never been anything false about hope," the melody drifts on.

The "Yes We Can" music video featuring Will.i.am and many other musicians is a prime example of the power of music and its influence on politics. The simple guitar melody, the presence of musicians and powerful lyrics attracted millions of viewers and spread the message that helped Obama's bid for the presidency. This demonstrates the power that music can cast onto our social world. A lingering melody or a subtle phrase, often leaves a strong impact on individuals, which is why they are often used in political activism.

Political activism by musicians is nothing new. In the 1930s and 40s Woody Guthrie protested against labour and class issues using his music to get the message out. During a cross-country trip he penned the lyrics to "This Land is Your Land", an unforgettable folk ballad portraying his strong views and opinions on the situation of the American working class. It demonstrated his strong desire for equality among citizens of his shared nation.

In the squares of a city
In the shadows of a steeple
By the relief office, I'd seen my people
As they stood there hungry, I stood there asking,
Is this land made for you and me?
As I went walking, I saw a sign there,
And on the sign there, it said "no trespassing"
But on the other side, it didn't say nothing!
That side was made for you and me.

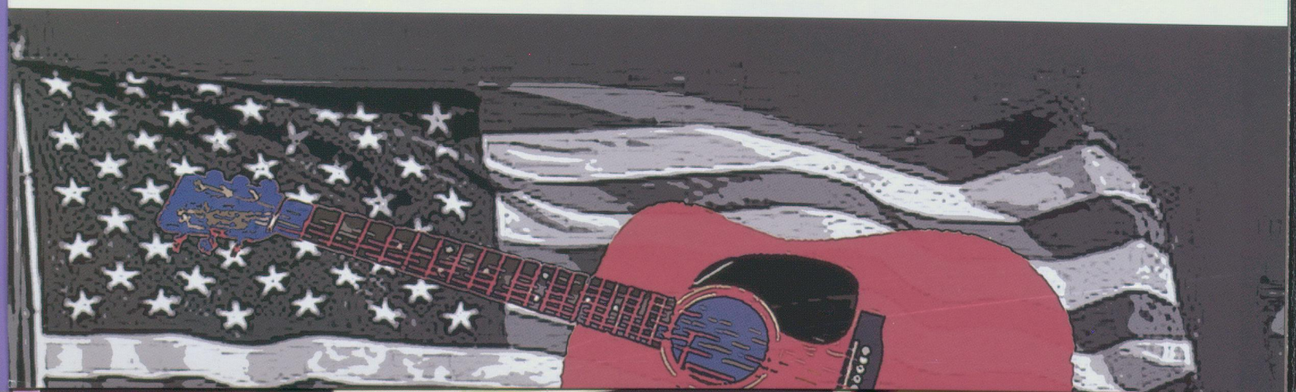
Civil rights were a major issue of protest in the 1960s. Musicians used their power of simple melodies and harmonies to get their message out. One of the most famous songs of this era, Bob Dylan's "Blowing in the Wind," simply states, "how many years can a people exist, before they're allowed to be free."

By 1965, the US military presence in Vietnam heightened. Folk singers along with rock stars started to appear at anti-war rallies. In 1969, at the height of the Vietnam War, John Lennon and Yoko Ono held a "bed-in" for peace. A reporter questioned the motive of this bed-in and Lennon spontaneously replied, "all we are saying is give peace a chance". The power of song and music was then relived as "Give Peace a Chance" was created and recorded, becoming the anthem of the anti-war movement. The catchy verses and tune will be forever implanted in our minds as much more than just another musical masterpiece.

Ev'rybody's talkin' 'bout
Bagism, Shagism, Dragism, Madism, Ragism, Tagism
This-ism, that-ism, ism ism ism
All we are saying is give peace a chance
All we are saying is give peace a chance

It was a time for change and the power of music was utilized as the means for activism. Political activism by musicians today however, is quite different from the past. Pop idols and icons use their glamour, power, and of course their songs to help mobilize the youth vote.

Musicians today, politically speaking, tend to further support liberals or democrats based on their socially liberal lifestyles. For instance, the US Democrats have had slightly more success at gaining musical endorsements and support than the Republicans. For example, in the 2004 presidential elections, Bruce Springsteen, Pearl Jam, the Dave Matthews band and the Dixie Chicks all teamed up in an anti-Bush movement. Other Democrats including the Black Eyed Peas, John Mellencamp, 50 Cent and Madonna have generously given their support over the years.



Republicans on the other hand, tend to have fewer musical supporters. The ones they do have however, tend to put their "money where their mouth is", so to speak, which in turn makes up for it. The entrance of all of these pop sensations into the political arena has undoubtedly assisted the youth vote.

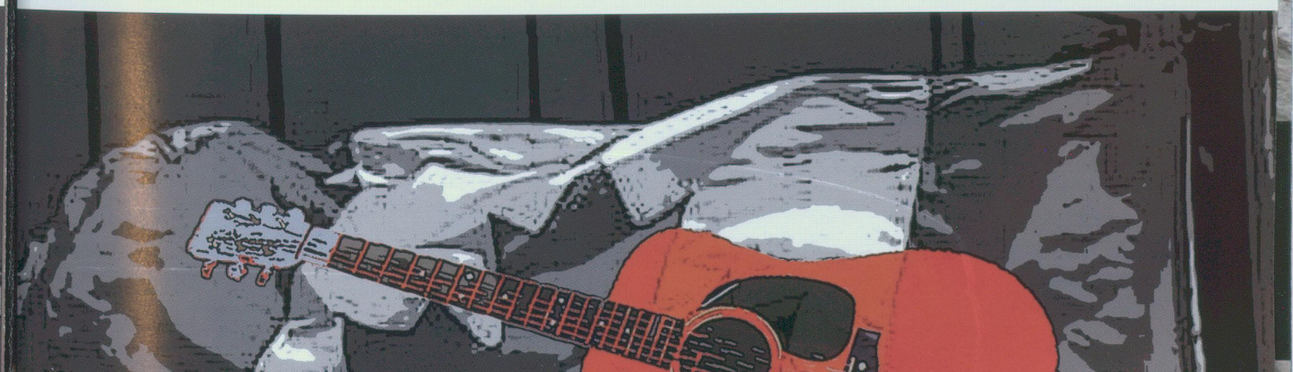
The Foo Fighters' guitarist Chris Shiflett stated, "I think it's important to get the message out as much as you can to young people, to get them involved in the political process and make sure they're not complacent ... We need to get the message out to kids that they can really swing this thing if they all got out and voted."

"It was a time for change and the power of music was utilized as the means for activism."

Musicians however, also refrain from supportingpoliticians.Nelson Wiseman, a Canadian Politics professor here at the University of Toronto stated, "you pursue celebrities at your own peril." The reason is that your image becomes entwined with theirs. Musicians therefore haven't always been keen on having their songs used in politics. For instance, Heart's Ann and Nancy Wilson condemned the use of their song "Barracuda" since, you guessed it, it was played in reference to Sarah Palins' high school nickname at a republican rally. According to *Rolling Stones Magazine*, President Ronald Reagan also tried to align himself with Bruce Springsteen, however the "Boss" condemned the use of his hit song "Born in the U.S.A."

One might then wonder, where is all of the musical influence regarding politics in Canada? Would Stephen Harper have won a majority cabinet if Celine Dion had sang at one of his rallies? The truth is Canadian singers who make it big move to the States or elsewhere. And when they do, they find the elections over there more intriguing and engaging than the ones back home. I mean who really wants to have their classic song forever linked to Harpers' sweater vest? We have however, racked up support for the NDP by some Canadian talent including Stephen Page of the Barenaked Ladies. Maybe our lack of musical support simply comes from the lack of a charismatic leader, one who the population feels is worthy of the support. As one can see with Obamamania this year, the musical supports and endorsements ultimately soared.

The power of music in making a difference in the political world cannot be underestimated. Whether it be the voices of Guthrie or Dylan in the mid-1950s fighting for class and civil rights, whether it be Lennon praying for peace, or pop sensations praising a leader of our time, music will always be the force that brings us together to fight for change. Music will always be a symbol of struggle, a symbol of the changing times, a symbol of the greatness of what can happen when lyrics, melodies, and politics collide.



Spotlight

Daniel Stern

As I climb up the stairs to the Junior Common Room where I have arranged to meet singer/songwriter and budding musician Victor Swift, I can't help but notice the impromptu piano instrumental that's unfolding amongst Diablo's fair-trade sipping customers. To my amazement, the youthful piano player is Mr. Swift. Beyond his years in every sense, Swift has taken the university experience in his stride, balancing his schoolwork with a relentless array of gigs and open-mic sessions. His aim is simple: "to share the music in my head with the hungry ears of the world." With a second album on its way, the first written and produced before Victor's sixteenth birthday, a catalogue of songs and videos online, and a memorable appearance on Canadian Idol, it looks like Swift is on his way…

DEMO: How did you get into music both as a fan and then as an artist?

VICTOR: I remember listening, at the age of nine, to Queen and Guns N' Roses but I also listened to a lot of classical music. As an artist, it all began 4 years ago when I bought my first instrument, the bass guitar. At the beginning, I wanted to learn every song ever written, but before long I learned that this dream would take a lifetime. Thus, I decided to take charge and write my own tunes. I gradated from bass to guitar after years of playing and loved the change; more versatility, and basically more opportunities to develop the music in my head. I have been playing guitar ever since and have picked up several other instruments along the way. I found myself writing a song a day and decided it was time to show the world. I recorded my first CD in 2007. The CD was recorded in several rooms of my house with the recording gear I had accumulated over the years. I began playing shows across Ontario promoting my CD and sharing fresh tunes with the world. The thing that kept me stuck to music once I started was the fact that I could trap a thought, emotion, or memory forever and I don't mean in just lyrics, I mean the music as well. Music today seems to have lost the personal touch which was once so important. I have another band called The Hours After. We perform one or twice a month. The sound is a lot heavier and rockier. It's Audioslave meets Radiohead I guess.

Victor Swift can be found at:
http://www.victorswift.com/
http://www.myspace.com/victorswiftmusic
YouTube Channel: victorswiftmusician

DEMO: What is your earliest memory in regards to music?

VICTOR: My earliest memory would have to be singing to Queen in the living room. My first record was Savage Garden and then my tastes must have developed pretty quickly because my second record was Aerosmith. I didn't start going to concerts until around five years ago. My first concert was Switchfoot and seeing the lead singer Jon Foreman was pretty inspiring. The crowds were really into it and that concert kicked off my passion for music. Jon had a huge impact on me continuing song writing. He has a quote that keeps me going when I'm having trouble finding my musical self, "song writing is a lot like digging for buried treasure, you hack and hack at the earth searching and searching but once you find a gold nugget nothing else matters"

DEMO: Do you think technology has made it easier for new artists, such as yourself, to have a voice and to reach wider audiences? Or has the competition and lack of originality swamped the music industry?

VICTOR: I feel that technology is both a step forward and a step backward. It's a step backward because nowadays record companies sift through so much material that it's become harder to have a voice and to be noticed. I believe that although websites such as MySpace are useful in reaching your fans and sharing your music, it's not the main way. To me, playing in the streets for no money or even playing here in the Junior Common Room is a more traditional way of reaching new audiences. On the other hand, MySpace has made it easier for everyone—both the fans and the artists. It puts the business perspective in the hands of the artist as you know who are coming to shows and how many listens your songs have had. As for the lack of originality, it depends on the commitment of the artist. If someone does have the talent and the right work ethic then that should come through. If they want to copy and rehash another singer or band then that's pretty sad.

DEMO: You've mentioned that you've recorded one album already and you're now in the process of recording your second album at the end of December?

VICTOR: Yeah, spot on! I bought a condenser microphone and used that with my laptop in order to record the songs. Outside of school, I'm learning sound engineering to try and understand how to record more effectively so I can produce a better recording. It's interesting trying to understand the mathematics and presets behind the recording process.

DEMO: What was your experience on the seventh Canadian Idol like?

VICTOR: I got to meet other kids who have a passion for music, there were a handful of people that were there for the fame but overall there were so many talented performers. The organizers of Canadian Idol rented out a hotel in Downtown Toronto and within one floor there were around twenty pianos. It allowed everyone to jam together and to appreciate, and contribute, to the music that was being created. It was a memorable experience especially as I managed to get down to the Top 200—I got to jam with the Top 12 which was sweet. Canadian Idol taught me a lot and inspired me to expand my musical exploration.

DEMO: Have you got many upcoming shows?

VICTOR: Yes. I'm playing all the open-mics at UofT. This fall alone I've played at The Opera House, El Mocambo, Holy Joe's, Hart House, and Kelly's Corner. Before starting at UofT, I used to play once or twice a month but school has given me an opportunity to perform—last month alone I have performed more than seven or eight shows in between schoolwork and recording my second album. At some of my shows I've been selling shirts which some of my fans created for me ... which was awesome.

DEMO: What do you think of Toronto's music scene at large? It seems like there's a plethora of venues and bands, it's almost too much!

VICTOR: To be honest, Toronto's music scene is saturated. It's overly saturated. There are so many random bands, many of which my friends are in, but there are a lack of solid venues to play in.

DEMO: Now that we are at the end of the first term of your first year at UofT, what are your thoughts on university life?

VICTOR: I'm enjoying school. It's much more flexible than high school. Although because I commute from home, my days are mostly from nine in the morning until I get home at nine in the evening which can suck. My classes are difficult, but they have to be. The professors are amazing, so intelligent and really down to earth people.

DEMO: What are you listening to at the moment?

VICTOR: Muse, Rise Against, Coldplay, LCD Soundsystem. There's a number of Australian bands I'm into at the moment, such as, The Cat Empire and Silver Chair. I don't cling to a single artist though, musical exploration is important so you know what is out there and what can be done.

Photograph by Daniel Stern

Victor Swift

Spotlight

Review

OSHEAGA:

Where Muddy Feet and Music Meet

Sandra Goldenberg

Osheaga is an Iroquois word that First Nations scholars believe to mean "meeting place"; an appropriate name for the annual Montreal summer festival that acts as a place for the best of today's indie, rock, pop, folk and electronica musicians to unite.

At Montreal's Parc Jean-Drapeau over the August long weekend, hipsters, rockers, young and old met to experience an array of musical acts, both the popular and the obscure.

Big names that played at the third year of the festival were Jack Johnson, the Killers, Cat Power, Iggy Pop, Duffy and Metric. Yet lesser-known acts such as German electronica band Booka Shade, hyper-bohemian Devotchka, and the new voice of old soul, Sharon Jones and the Dap Kings, also drew huge crowds to their stages.

Unlike a concert, the festival atmosphere is more disjointed. There is more going on, more walking, and less focus. But this is precisely the allure for many festival-goers.

Getting your feet muddy, trekking from stage to stage, and seeing many acts as opposed to just one allows for a fuller concert experience. If you don't like one act, you can move on to the next; allowing greater probability that you'll enjoy the music and your ticket money will be well spent.

It's impossible to see all the acts, as the four stages are being played on simultaneously, but organizers do an excellent job in the timing of the shows. For example, electronica and indie bands play in the same time slot so that fans of either genre aren't torn between watching two anticipated acts.

The Osheaga program provides a full breakdown of the festival events and a map, so finding your way around the park, seeing your favourite artists, and locating the port-a-potties is almost intuitive.

The two-day festival on Île Sainte-Hélène is well worth the ticket price, which is $120 for both days or $67.50 for just one.

Nick Farkas, Osheaga's director of programming, was quoted by Canadian Press suggesting that next year the festival take place over three days as opposed to two. No word yet on if the committee has accepted his proposal.

Information available at: www.osheaga.com

The sweet, catchy, and instrumentally varied sounds of Hooded Fang warmed up the crowd at the Arbor Room's free show in early November, with the more outrageous and antics-filled Run With the Kittens as the headliner. The Hart House music venue, with tables and chairs left set up for a casual atmosphere, was completely filled, with each act having at least a few audience members who knew all the songs by heart, and almost everyone was dancing as much as was physically possible to dance while sitting down.

With three girls and three guys making up the group, Fang was effortlessly charming. Band members switched instruments, which included such additions as an accordion, trombone, and xylophone, every few songs.

The band—a group of friends, roommates, and, as they say on their website, "lovers"—just formed last winter, but played quite a strong set nonetheless. Playing mostly tracks off their EP, they included some new songs into their set as well. Complete with shouts and hand-clapping, they were a classic indie act, minus any pretensions or clichés.

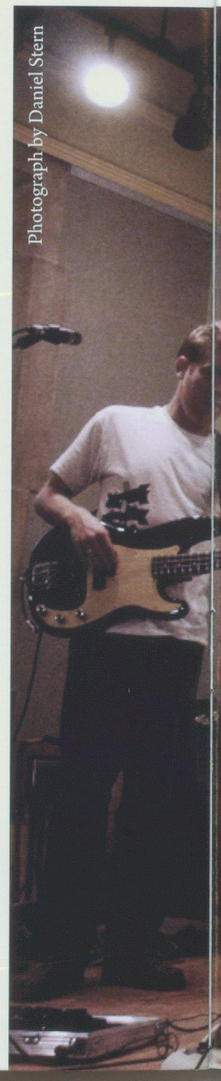
Then came Run With the Kittens. With such a ridiculous band name (and ridiculous CD titles to match), and considering that they have managed to play over three hundred shows in the past four years of their career by playing every Thursday night at the Cameron House, I didn't expect to see four so average looking guys take the stage.

Watching the lead singer, Nate Milk, perform was like a comedy routine; but the band actually possessed such talent that the humour never became too much, since it wasn't the only thing their performance was riding on. Milk, wearing hilarious clear-blue wrap-around sunglasses, and Jake Gilrichs, the drummer, wearing what looked like sunglasses he could have worn up to age nine, engaged in intense drum/guitar face-offs that had audience members on the edge of their seats. There was even a tambourine-off!

In fact, audience interaction was taken to a whole new level as Milk ventured into the crowd for a cover of the horribly cheesy Scott Baio song, "What Was in that Kiss?". Milk danced suggestively with many laughing fans, and even stroked their faces.

The performance of their own songs was equally playful: a mask was donned for "Tool of the Opera", in which Milk sang, "I lock myself in a pantry of despair". Covering much material from their second CD "Condos and Lofts", which came out in 2007, the band emitted such presence and commitment even when being completely off the wall, that everyone was kept in rapt attention. A song called "Socar (The Fictional Barbarian)" from their outlandish first release, was delivered with extra vigor, as Milk bellowed to the audience "Tell me your life with passion, for I am the fictional barbarian!"

Running jokes kept the show moving between songs, and by the end of the night, Uof T and even some York students, went home five dollars short from buying a well-worth-it EP or two. But with soft tunes in their heads, and sharing a reflective laugh with their friends, the night could only have ended on a high note.



Photograph by Daniel Stern

Local Bands at Hart House

Shauna Keddy

Review

Workshops 101:

A Creative Way to Explore Music

Mary Scourboutakos

This is something of an unconventional review, as it encompasses a general summary of my collective experiences attending music workshops. It provides all of the facts on these fun and unique learning opportunities where you learn to see and hear music from a different perspective.

One of the greatest advantages of living in a city like Toronto is not only all of the musical events and happenings around the city, but the fact that so many great musicians reside here. As a result, it is not uncommon to see these seasoned professionals holding free workshops and clinics across the city. Whether it is for the avid aspiring musician or simply the musical hobbyist, these are some of the best opportunities to pick up some tricks to incorporate into your own lick next time you're exercising your chop—or in other words, to learn something new.

In my experiences, no two workshops are ever the same. While some are performance-based, others focus heavily upon discussion. Some inspire, while others primarily entertain. As a result, you never know exactly what to expect.

Perhaps you are curious about what one might actually learn at one of these workshops? One that particularly stands out from my own experience is The Importance of Time and Rhythm, part of Long and McQuade's clinic series, a free workshop that even Mr. Long himself attended.

Here, Robi Botos, a local jazz pianist, discussed his views on the connection between jazz and classical music, demonstrating this using Be-Bop and Bach as examples. He also emphasized the need to appreciate all music because of the art form's interrelatedness, and the importance of "learning the language" of music to promote understanding.

Seeing the musicians up close and listening to them speak about their music is markedly different from any concert experience. The musicians often engage in conversation with the audience, sharing their insider views on an assortment of topics. There has primarily been one dominant message that is an undertone in all musical discussion: Although it seems obvious that listening is the most important thing, discovering new dimensions for listening will surely change your experience as a listener.

Even for performers, Robi Botos commented that "when you practice, [you should] listen like you're listening to someone else." Essentially, by learning to understand the language of music, one will better understand the conversation that the musicians are having and will likely deepen their appreciation for music.

You can never stop learning new things about music, because music is a journey of new discoveries, a constant re-education. Whether you are in need of a new mnemonic device for remembering the structure of chords, looking for insight on standard repertoire, or even practice techniques, these are just a few of the things you might learn about at one of these fabulous workshops. On that note, keep your ears open for these free music clinics where you can sit back, listen…and learn!

A Selection of **Free Upcoming Workshops**

Opera 101
January 13th Adrianne Pieczonka & Virginia Hatfield Fidelio
March 31st Anne Manson A Midsummer Night's Dream
The Drake Hotel — 1150 Queen St. W. / 7:30-9:00 / coc.ca

UofT Faculty of Music Ken Page Masterclass Series
January 16th Jon McCaslin
January 23rd Kris Davis Trio
January 30th Ian Froman
February 13th Andrew Downing's Arts & Letters Quartet
Edward Johnson Building — Boyd Neel Room / 3:00-4:30 / www.uoftjazz.ca

Be sure to check out music festivals such as the TD Canada Trust Toronto Jazz Festival and the Beaches International Jazz Festival, which always feature a series of workshops as part of their programming..

Nick & Norah's Infinite Playlist

Image from www.exclaim.ca

Vineeta Moraes

Here's the scoop on Peter Sollett's latest flick, *Nick and Norah's Infinite Playlist*: Nick O'Leary (Michael Cera), the only straight member in an all-gay band The Jerkoffs, is moping over the breakup with his hot girlfriend Tris (Alexis Dziena). Yet, he still continues to make mix CDs for her, with the latest one being *Road to Closure Vol. 12*. Norah (Kat Dennings) has never met Nick, but finds the CD in a trashcan at school, where the obnoxious Tris has thrown it away. The two of them meet at a nightclub, where Norah asks Nick to be her boyfriend for five minutes, to make her ex (Jay Baruchel) jealous. They both have similar tastes in music, and set off to find the elusive cult band Where's Fluffy. On their journey, they deal with hyperactive band mates and a run-down Yugo. Then there's Norah's best friend Caroline (Ari Graynor)—a surefire drunk who just wants to be taken home.

The film is an adaptation of Rachel Cohn and David Levithan's young adult novel of the same title. The first-person gritty commentary of the book is toned down on screen. The PG-13 rating would blow up if the constant four-letter profanity and explicitly sexual thoughts were featured in the film.

Sollett's film contains a string of eclectic subplots, the funniest one being Caroline's silly antics around the city (the "fishing for gum" incident could have been excluded). Although the subplots add to the film's euphoric charm, they seem out of sync with the two main characters' progressive relationship. Sollett's portrayal of New York City is an energetic beast brought to life by the underground music scene. However, this beast is sanitized and encased within a bubble. Manhattan and Brooklyn become a crime and grime-free playground for the characters to do as they please. Despite the disjointed subplots and sheltered settings, *Nick and Norah's Infinite Playlist* delivers in great acting and music. Cera and Dennings share an oddball chemistry, which is perfect in depicting Nick and Norah's relationship. In particular, Cera brings his cute and gawky charm from previous roles (*Juno* and *Arrested Development*), in his portrayal of Nick. Let's just hope he does not get overly typecast as the "go-to deadpan comedy guy" in future works.

As the search for love and Where's Fluffy unfolds, the film's own playlist resonates onscreen and features indie-rock artists like: Vampire Weekend, Bishop Allen, Chris Bell, and We Are Scientists. It is a soundtrack of varying decibels, with the sounds of electronic keyboards and mood-altering, strum-filled chords.

Mix CDs are another striking music-related reference in the film. Nick's creative mixes are treated as an art form. Rather than getting Tris a conventional box of chocolates, he labours over hand-drawn cover art and selection of the "perfect" songs. His approach is reminiscent of mix tapes, made popular in the 80s. Mix tapes are an even better mode for self-expression because it lacks the ability to skip songs. Therefore, the listener is subjected to a full aural experience of what that person is trying to convey. Nick's musical mixing is an alternative to the mix tape, but still very personal and effective (at least in Norah's eyes). Unlike Nick, many people in our generation would rather take the faster route and download an MP3 playlist out of iTunes. There's too much texting and facebooking in our world to be worried about perfecting a mix CD. 'Tis a sad thought, but true.

This film is a boxful of playful banter, indie rock and offbeat sidekicks waiting to burst forth. It follows the conventions of a teen romantic comedy, with an added bonus of a killer soundtrack. Peter Sollett does a fitting job in letting the night owls roam free amidst the nightscape of New York City.

Review

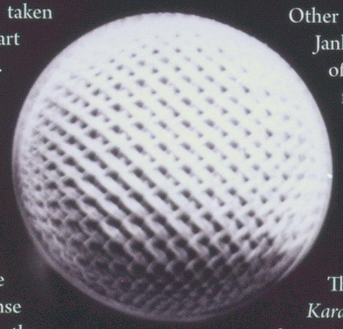
Madeleine Foote

The Evolution of Karaoke:

From Tasteless Imitation to Brilliant Art

Upon entering, the Empty Orchestra exhibit at the Justina M. Barnicke Gallery in Hart House instantly provokes those forcibly repressed memories of drunken karaoke nights everyone seems to have. However, this is not your typical drunken karaoke. This exhibit of five installations, almost every one endowed with a disco ball, makes you realize how taking something considered so mundane, even tasteless, out of its typical context can become so meaningful, so poignant, and embody so much about what pop culture has become. Amidst the obvious Canadian/American Idol comparisons there seems to be something more profound here. Something artistic.

Ichiro Tanaka's piece *Classical Music Karaoke* depicts great classical works by Tchaikovsky, Strauss and Rossini on a typical karaoke screen. The lyrics that appear, seemingly intended to be sung, are actually gibberish lyrics in Japanese "katakana" symbols. Tanaka's piece is evidently commenting on the liberties taken with respect to the original art piece when turned into karaoke. In the fact that none of these classical pieces had lyrics not to mention the completely nonsensical words given to participators, it's clear that while this installation is labeled "interactive", it is no mistake that it is impossible to interact with. In some sense making Tanaka's piece acts as the antithesis to karaoke—it is music, untouchable.



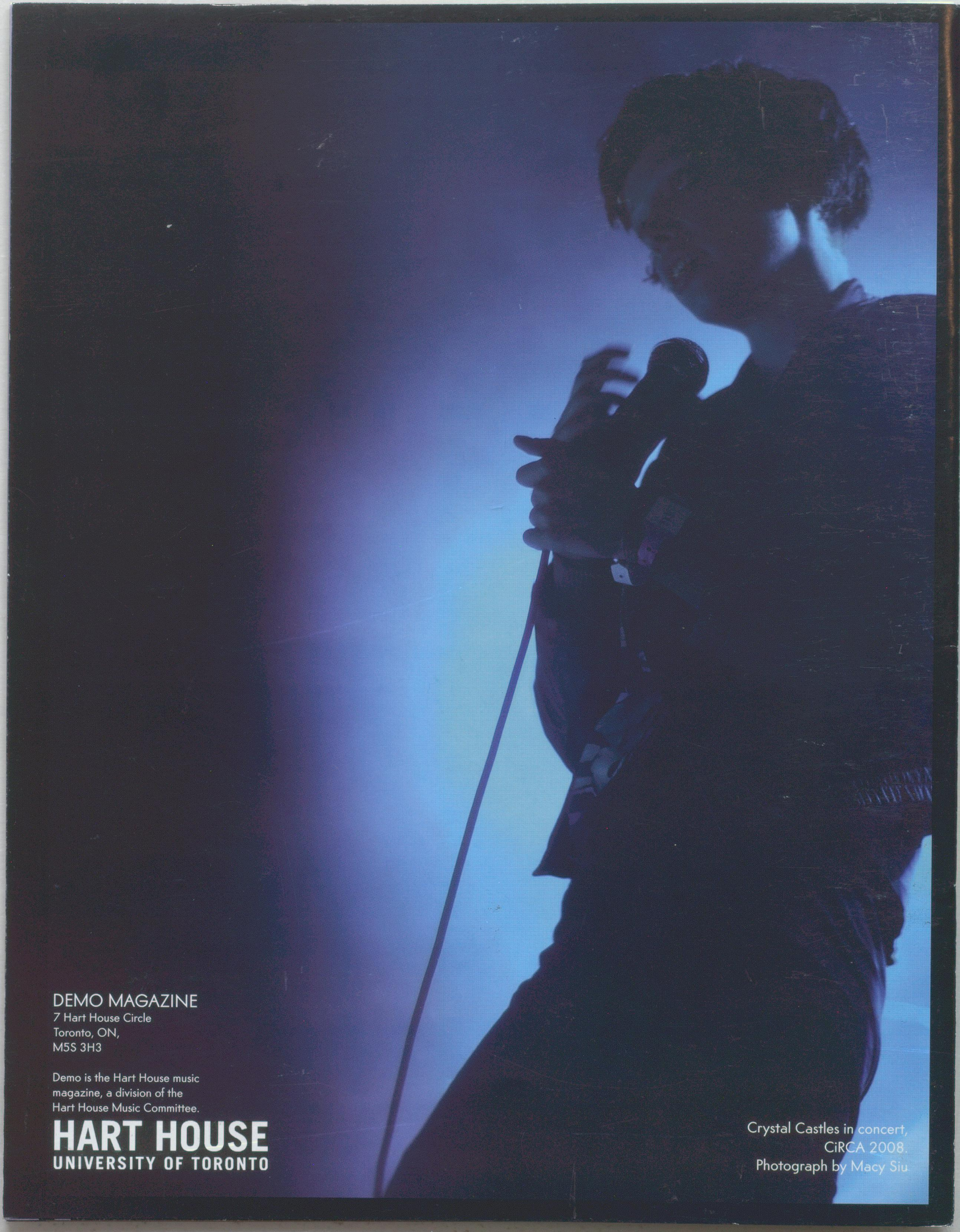
Karen Tam's installation *Tchang Tchou Karaoke Lounge* features an interactive menu of classic Americana songs from which you can choose. Each song—such as Hank Williams' Jambalaya—appears sung in Chinese as opposed to the American originals with a complete, seeming ignorance of the English original. In addition, the lyrics on screen appear in Cajun French, not the original English version. The video that appears is of young girls dancing and appearing in a parade. It's no accident that the combination of effects here is about as far from the original Williams tune as you can get. This is clearly a comment on the Chinese ability to turn another culture into their own, specifically through karaoke. Karaoke here is not only uttering lyrics to pop hits, but in fact changing the lyrics to their own language to create a new piece of art that is wholly representative of Chinese culture. This karaoke isn't presented so much as an imitation of art but as art in and of itself.

Other pieces in Empty Orchestra include Christian Jankowski's installation *The Day We Met* in which a video of a "typical Korean drama" and love story is set to a flexible soundtrack, which you can personally sing. As well as Wang Gongxin's *Kara Oke*, a looped video piece which depicts karaoke singers of all ages on the teeth in a grin of the giant mouth of a male. Singers all sing a single note, which blends into an electronic tweeter.

The standout however was Candice Breitz's installation *Karaoke*. It consists of a dark room with ten TV's in a circle, facing each other. Upon entrance you hear a cacophony of sounds and see the familiar blue light emulated from television screens. Once inside the circle however, this piece, though not as obviously interactive, is certainly the most provocative of the exhibit. Each screen shows a karaoke singer of different cultural background singing the same song—"Killing Me Softly"—in what at times seems to be rounds, and at other times simply chaos. The longer you stand in the centre of the piece, the less possible it becomes to leave. You begin to hear chords, forget where you are, sort of like a dream. You begin to experiment with your stance, realizing that facing in different directions allows you to hear different individuals singing. The whole thing begs the comparison to American and Canadian Idol phenomena—each singer is even depicted against a blue background—but in some way by emphasizing the "ugliness" of karaoke (that is the horrible warbling off-tone singing that scares most of us out of even considering it), it all at once becomes beautifully artistic. Breitz's piece in particular makes one realize this whole exhibit is really about turning the imitation of art into art itself. Overall, curators Maiko Tanaka and Heather Keung have done a fantastic job of seeing karaoke in a different light, one in which karaoke is not the cheapening of original art but rather the evolution of old into new.

WANG GONGXIN, *Kara Oke*, 2000, video still, courtesy of the artist

CANDICE BREITZ
Karaoke, **2002**
DVD Installation: 10 Looping DVDs
Installation View: New York Center for Media Arts, New York
Photograph: Jason Mandella



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HART HOUSE
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

Crystal Castles in concert, CiRCA 2008.
Photograph by Macy Siu